



CEPPS/NDI Quarterly Report: January 1, 2005 to March 31, 2005

**JORDAN: SUPPORTING POLITICAL PARTIES, PARLIAMENTARY BLOCS AND
WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

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I. SUMMARY

Political parties and parliamentary blocs in Jordan suffer from both internal and external challenges and pressures. They lack maturity and the ability to identify and present serious programs and platforms. They are dominated by individualistic agendas and operate under a restrictive political parties law and outdated bylaws. Their effectiveness is also further challenged by tribalism, where blood ties are often more important than political platforms. The Islamists represent the only strong, organized opposition force, best represented in the Islamic Action Front (IAF) party. They too fail to present national policy positions and programs, however. More importantly, the polarization of Jordanian politics, with the regime on one side and the Islamists on the other, has resulted in the lack of a democratic middle where reform-minded democratic activists are able to effectively engage in the political processes of the Kingdom.

Since the June 2003 parliamentary elections, there has been a renewed emphasis on political development and democratic reform in Jordan. There is a strong political will on the part of King Abdullah and a few key ministers to initiate and sustain Jordan's political development process. For the most part however, such will and enthusiasm do not permeate the Kingdom's social and political institutions. Political parties are not well developed or integrated into the political culture of the country and continue to face challenges to their ability to adequately reach out to citizens and present policy programs that respond to their needs. Most importantly, members of parliament are inexperienced and lack adequate staff and resources and parliamentary blocs lack cohesion and stability. Women in Jordan are also still struggling to overcome institutional and social barriers to their political participation and are especially affected by the parliamentary and party challenges mentioned above.

To promote a more representative multiparty political system and strengthen women's political participation in Jordan, NDI's current program seeks to support political parties and parliamentary blocs through a series of consultations and training workshops that address such topics as policy research and development with a focus on constituency outreach; articulation of policy positions and platforms; and media development and media relations. NDI is also working to organize a national forum to debate the valuable role that women activists play within parties, and identify and develop a strategy by which parties can further encourage women's political participation.

During this quarter, NDI conducted a round of consultations with the various blocs in Jordan's House of Representatives as well as a limited number of political parties. The purpose of these sessions was to assess each bloc and party's capacity at this time and to inform NDI's future training and exchange activities in the country. In addition to the consultations, the Institute held an event on "Women's Political Participation in Morocco" for representatives of the 33 political parties and over 20 women's NGOs in Jordan. The activity, conducted in partnership with the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), featured a presentation on the state of women's political participation in Morocco, as well as a discussion session on how political parties in Jordan can effectively support women's political participation and candidacy for elected office. On February 16, NDI also hosted a dinner for members and senior staff of Jordan's House of Representatives on the occasion of the establishment of the Institute's office in Amman. NDI President Ken Wollack also visited Jordan in early March and held meetings with cabinet ministers, parliamentary leaders, civil society activists, as well as the Chargé D'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy and the USAID Mission Director in Jordan.

From March 28-April 1, 2005, NDI held the Win with Women Regional Campaign School in Amman, Jordan. The campaign school provided over 80 potential women candidates and campaign activists from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank/Gaza with exposure to the skills necessary to wage professional and credible campaigns, focusing on such topics as crafting a campaign strategy, raising money to be competitive, and working effectively with the media.

In the next quarter, NDI will organize several training workshops for parliamentary blocs that focus on such topics as comparative rules of procedures for blocs and the impact internal bylaws have on the functioning of the blocs. Activities will also address how MPs can build a strong, cohesive and effective parliamentary bloc, with an opportunity to learn more about regional and international models. NDI will also organize activities for individual MPs on such topics as the proper role of an MP, message development and dissemination, constituency outreach, and media relations. With regard to political parties, NDI will hold strategic planning workshops for interested parties and will work to provide experience sharing/exchange opportunities for party leaders with other political parties in the region, particularly from Morocco and Yemen. NDI will also hold roundtable discussions with the parties to debate the new draft political parties law. Throughout these activities, NDI will continue its efforts to strengthen women's political participation in the Kingdom and will work closely with political parties and women's NGOs to help them develop and adapt concrete measures by which they can encourage women's participation and candidacy for elected office.

II. BACKGROUND

After postponing the November 2001 parliamentary elections and dissolving parliament in June 2001, Jordan's King Abdullah appointed a committee to draft a new election law and passed the draft without vetting it through parliament. The new law disappointed many observers by maintaining a voting formula that many critics contest increases tribal domination of elections. The law increases the number of parliamentary seats and constituencies and allocates a few more seats to urban, Palestinian-dominated areas, although it does not adequately correct the imbalance in the number of voters in various constituencies that undermines the principle of equality of each person's vote. The law also does nothing to enhance the role of political parties, level the playing field for women, or downplay tribalism – all recurring hindrances to democracy in Jordan. With the new elections law in place, observers anticipated that the parliamentary elections may be held in summer or fall of 2002, but polls did not take place until June 17, 2003.

The June 2003 Parliamentary Elections

Jordan's weak civil society and the inability of political parties to impress voters in a largely tribal society have long hampered the Kingdom's move toward democracy. While tribal affiliations remained a more decisive electoral factor than ideological or political considerations, the June 2003 elections did present an opportunity for Jordanian citizens to deepen their participation in the political process and advance a sense of democratic entitlement, which is important both to the country and the region. The parliamentary elections witnessed the return of Islamic parties, as well as leftist and nationalist groups, after six years of political disengagement. Jordan's nascent civil society also had an opportunity to mobilize and develop as it studied and analyzed the electoral process. Moreover, six new parliamentary seats were created and reserved for women, guaranteeing the election of six women deputies.

Post-Election Developments

Following the elections, the newly elected parliament saw the formation of loosely grouped ideological blocs. In addition to the Islamist and Democratic blocs, the National Parliamentary Action grouping came to encompass 30 deputies and Al-Watan included 23. The Reformist Bloc has 5 members. The remaining Independent MPs are often viewed as a 6th bloc. With the exception of the Islamist bloc, almost none emerged as a vigorous political lobby with a clearly defined agenda. Parliament held an extraordinary session in the summer of 2003 and began discussing some of the most controversial laws among the 230 temporary laws passed by government in the past two years. The Senate and the Lower House differed on three temporary laws debated during this session, in particular the Personal Status Law, dubbed the "khuloe law," which allows women to initiate divorce by paying their husbands financial compensation. Islamist, conservative and tribal MPs joined ranks and dashed the hopes of both women and human rights groups by rejecting the law - albeit by a narrow margin, with 44 deputies out of 83 voting against.

In November 2003, the King appointed 55 senators to the Upper House, including 7 women. The 14th parliament's first regular session began on December 1 and concluded at the

end of March. In addition to parliamentary developments, a new government was sworn in on October 25, 2003 in Jordan. The 21-member cabinet was led by Prime Minister Faisal Fayeze and brought together former ministers along with many new faces, mainly young technocrats, as well as three women. Some ministries were scrapped, others were merged, and a new portfolio, that of political development, was created to implement a comprehensive plan for reform.

Current Political Context

New Draft Political Parties Law

On March 22, Minister of Political Development Munther Shara presented a new draft law amending the existing Political Parties Law passed in 1992. Shara said the formulation of the draft was based on in-depth dialogue and meetings with the Kingdom's political parties and civil society institutions, in addition to youth, women's and human rights organizations. The Ministry plans to continue to receive reactions and proposals to revise the draft before proceeding with the constitutional procedures to enact it. Political parties have reacted positively to the draft law as it entitles political parties to public funding from the state budget. Political parties had viewed the lack of public funding as a major impediment to their development. The Coordinative Council of Parties, which includes most of the 32 legal parties in Jordan, has also recently moved to push for a new elections law based on proportional representation to further promote the development of a competitive multiparty political system.

Local Governance and Decentralization

In a national televised address to the Jordanian public, King Abdullah announced in late January plans to decentralize local government by redrawing three distinct provincial administrations that are to be run by publicly elected local councils. Each region will have a local council directly elected by its people to work with the elected municipal councils in the governorates to set priorities and design plans and programs related to their respective regions. This new strategy is seen as a strong public empowerment technique that will improve efficiency in the provision of local services and encourage political participation. A Royal committee was recently formed to study the various aspects of this approach and develop the appropriate mechanisms for its implementation. It includes three former prime ministers and six former ministers, as well as current Lower House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali.

In another related development, the Lower House recently voted to abolish temporary amendments made to the Municipalities Law in 2003, which stipulate that half the members of municipal councils and all mayors would be appointed. The House also approved amendments that disallow the candidacy of MPs for local councils and that sets the number of municipal council members based on the area's population. These and other changes to the law are currently awaiting the Senate's approval.

III. OBJECTIVES

NDI's strategy for the next three years in Jordan involves strengthening the capacity of political parties, parliamentary blocs and politically marginalized groups, such as women, to improve their abilities to promote democratic practices at all levels of Jordanian society. With the overall goal of encouraging a more representative multiparty political system and expanding women's political participation over the next three years, the specific objectives of NDI's program in Jordan for the first 14 months or Phase I of the proposed program are the following:

- To provide political parties and parliamentary blocs with the technical skills and resources necessary to develop coherent national platforms and effectively present them to constituents;
- To assist political parties and parliamentary blocs to expand their support bases and become better representatives of the Jordanian electorate; and
- To promote increased support for women activists in political parties and encourage the adoption of effective measures to strengthen their roles.

IV. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

A. Consultations with Parliamentary Blocs and Political Parties

To promote a more representative multiparty political system and strengthen women's political participation in Jordan, NDI currently works to support political parties and parliamentary blocs in Jordan through a series of consultations and training workshops that address such topics as policy research and development with a focus on constituency outreach; articulation of policy positions and platforms; and media development and media relations. NDI is also working in partnership with political parties and women's organizations to help them to develop strategies by which parties can further encourage women's political participation and candidacy for elected office.

From February 6-11, 2005, NDI conducted a round of consultations with the various blocs in Jordan's House of Representatives as well as a limited number of political parties. The purpose of these sessions was to assess each bloc and party's capacity at this time and to inform NDI's future training and exchange activities in the country. NDI met with representatives of all seven blocs in Parliament: National Parliamentary Action Bloc, Democratic Alliance Bloc, Islamic Action Front Bloc, National Democratic Bloc, Al-Watan Bloc, National Front Bloc and New Reformists Bloc. The Institute also met with independent MPs and senior parliamentary staff. Meetings were also held with the National Constitutional Party (NCP), the Democratic Party of the Left and Al-Ahed party.

Mr. Gerard Latulippe conducted the consultations. Mr. Latulippe is NDI's Resident Director in Morocco where he currently manages a capacity building program for Moroccan MPs and parliamentary staff. Mr. Latulippe has over 20 years of experience in political affairs at the local, provincial and federal levels, having served as special adviser of a former Québec

Premier and as Minister of Public Security and Member of Parliament. He also has a strong experience in the Québec public service having held two diplomatic posts as Québec General Delegate in Mexico and Brussels and as Deputy Under Secretary of the Ministry of International Affairs. Mr. Latulippe is a lawyer. He holds a Master's Degree in International Politics from the Université Libre de Bruxelles as well as a License in Law and a Post Graduate in Business Administration (DSA) from Montréal University.

The primary objectives of these consultations were to:

1. Provide Jordanian MPs with an overview on the importance of parliamentary blocs and the role they play within legislatures;
2. Assess the current needs of each parliamentary bloc and identify concrete ways to strengthen them; and
3. Determine the extent of interaction between political parties and parliamentary blocs and ways to improve linkages between them.

While in Jordan, NDI Morocco Country Director Gerard Latulippe conducted an interview with the Jordan News Agency (Petra) that focused on parliamentary blocs, political parties and women in Jordan.

The article from the interview can be found at

<http://www.petra.gov.jo/nepras/2005/Feb/14/23812200.htm>

The same article also appeared in Arabic in two major Jordanian daily newspapers.



مقابلة مع مسؤول في المعهد الديمقراطي الوطني للشؤون الدولية
Interview with Official at the NDIJA

Parliamentary Consultations

NDI met with representatives of all seven blocs in Parliament: National Parliamentary Action Bloc, Democratic Alliance Bloc, Islamic Action Front Bloc, National Democratic Bloc, Al-Watan Bloc, National Front Bloc and New Reformists Bloc. Meetings were held with leaders and members of each bloc individually in order to give MPs the opportunity and space to feely express the needs of their respective bloc. MPs were also asked to complete a comprehensive questionnaire about their blocs that provided useful input on such topics as bloc membership, structure, administration, discipline and strategy. Another key component of NDI's parliamentary assistance program in Jordan is to assist individual MPs to better execute their duties as national legislators by effectively reaching out to constituents and articulating

developed positions on policies. In this context, MPs were also encouraged to discuss the way that they view their individual role within the legislature and describe challenges that they face in their day-to-day work within parliament.

Parliamentary consultations were specifically focused on the following main questions:

- What is the value/role of parliamentary blocs in the Jordanian legislature?
- How solid/consistent are blocs within Parliament?
- What is the history of blocs inside the Jordanian legislature?
- Are blocs institutionalized in by-laws? Are they formal structures or informal groupings?
- Do blocs have access to pre-assigned parliamentary staff and resources?
- What are the challenges facing parliamentary blocs?
- When applicable, how strong are the linkages and interaction between parliamentary blocs and their respective political party outside of parliament?
- What are some concrete ways to strengthen blocs?

Political Party Consultations

The number of existing legal parties in Jordan currently stands at 33. Most of the parties are small, disorganized, and appeal mostly to Jordan's middle class and elite. The parties center more on individual leaders and personalities than on political platforms or ideologies. The Muslim Brotherhood, which is officially registered as a charity and social organization, has not formed a political party, but joined the umbrella organization, the Islamic Action Front (IAF). The IAF remains the most credible political party in Jordan. However, it is a party based essentially on religious values with no real programs for governance.

Of the seven parliamentary blocs in the current legislature, only three have ties to legal political parties. The Islamist bloc corresponds to the IAF. The Democratic Alliance bloc has loose ties with the Democratic Party of the Left and the National Parliamentary Action bloc corresponds to the pro-government NCP. In an effort to better understand linkages between parties and parliamentary blocs and to assess the parties' capacity at this time, NDI held consultative sessions with the NCP, the Democratic Party of the Left and Al-Ahed party. While not represented by elected MPs in the Lower House, Al-Ahed provides for an interesting case study, given its recent membership in and then withdrawal from the centrist coalition, the Jordanian National Movement.

In meeting with Jordanian political parties, discussions focused on the following questions:

- What are the obstacles to political party development in Jordan?
- What is the party's internal organizational structure?
- When applicable, what is the extent of interaction and coordination between the party and its corresponding MPs and/or bloc?
- When applicable, do the party and bloc advocate similar positions on key policy issues?
- Do elected MPs assume a special role/position within the party?

B. Presentation on “Women’s Political Participation in Morocco”

In cooperation with the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), NDI organized a presentation and discussion on “Women’s Political Participation in Morocco” on Tuesday, February 8, 2005 from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at the Hyatt Amman Hotel. The event featured a presentation by Mr. Gerard Latulippe on the role political parties in Morocco are playing in advancing women’s political participation in the Kingdom, with a special focus on the experiences of the 2002 legislative elections. Mr. Latulippe also spoke of NDI’s democracy and governance programs in Morocco. The presentation was then followed by a Question and Answer period and a discussion session on how political parties in Jordan can support women’s political participation and candidacy for elected office.

In attendance were leaders and representatives of major political parties in Jordan, including the NCP, the Jordanian People’s Committees Movement, the Jordanian Arab New Dawn Party, the Jordan People’s Democratic Party (Al-Hashd), the Party of Justice and Development, and the Jordan Rafah (Welfare) party. Also in attendance were women activists and representatives of Jordanian women’s organizations such as the Jordanian National Forum for Women, the General Federation of Jordanian Women, as well as the women’s branch of the General Federation of Labor Unions. Finally, Freedom House and the U.S. Embassy in Jordan were also represented at the event.

C. Dinner Event for Jordan’s House of Representatives

On February 16, 2005, NDI hosted a dinner at the Sheraton Amman hotel for members and senior staff of Jordan’s House of Representatives on the occasion of the establishment of the Institute’s office in Amman. Guests included over 35 MPs and a limited number of parliamentary staff, as well as NDI’s Beirut-based Senior Regional Representative and Jordan program staff. The dinner featured a powerpoint presentation on NDI’s programs in the Middle East and North Africa and a welcome speech by NDI senior staff. The event sought to introduce Jordan’s elected MPs to NDI’s programs in the country and to present the various ways by which NDI can be of assistance to them, their blocs, and their constituents. It also helped to strengthen relationships between the Institute and key figures in the Parliament, and provided for a platform for the announcement of upcoming training and exchange activities with MPs and blocs.

At the conclusion of the event, MPs thanked NDI for its efforts and support to Jordan’s Parliament and welcomed the establishment of a field office in Amman. MP Salameh Al Ghwairi spoke of the successful NDI study mission to the United States that he personally led in September. With funding from the Institute for Representative Government (IRG), NDI hosted an 11-day study mission in September 2004 to Washington DC and Annapolis, MD for 12 members of Jordan’s House of Representatives, and two senior parliamentary staff, including two women. The mission informed participants on the role of political parties, legislative blocs, legislative staff, advocacy groups and constituents in the democratic policy-making process.



Scenes from NDI's dinner event for Jordan's House of Representatives, held at the Sheraton Amman Hotel on February 16, 2005

D. NDI President's Visit to Jordan

On March 2-3, NDI President Ken Wollack traveled to Jordan and met with cabinet ministers and parliamentary leaders to discuss the current state of political reforms in the country, specifically with regard to parliamentary blocs and political parties. NDI Senior Regional Representative Joseph Hall also traveled to Amman from Beirut for the meetings. Meetings were held with:

- Dr. Marwan Muasher, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs and Government Performance;
- Dr. Munther Shara, Minister of Political Development; and
- Hon. Abdul Hadi Al Majali, Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament.

Additionally, Mr. Wollack and Mr. Hall met with AmmanNet Director Daoud Kuttub as well as Dr. Mustapha Hamarneh, Director of the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan. They also met with Mr. David Hale, Charge D'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Amman, and Ms. Anne Aarnes, USAID Mission Director. During these meetings, numerous programming opportunities were identified, particularly in the areas of focus group research and parliamentary study missions. NDI will follow up on these discussions and develop appropriate strategies for program design, funding, and implementation.

E. Win with Women Regional Campaign School

From March 28-April 1, 2005, NDI held the Win with Women Regional Campaign School in Amman, Jordan. The campaign school provided over 80 potential women candidates and campaign activists from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank/Gaza with exposure to the skills necessary to wage professional and credible campaigns, focusing on such topics as:

- deciding to run for elected office;
- crafting a campaign strategy;
- raising money to be competitive;
- developing a campaign message; and
- working effectively with the media.

In addition, participants were assigned to one of the three following specialized tracks:

- 1) Running a Winning Campaign
- 2) Political Advocacy
- 3) Advanced Communications & Skills

Minister of Political Development, Dr. Munther Share', opened the campaign school and spoke of Jordan's accomplishments as well as challenges with regard to women's political participation. Three prominent Jordanian journalists and communications experts also participated in a panel discussion on "How to get the Media's Attention" on the first day of the event. Mr. David Hale, Charge D'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Jordan, also spoke at the closing ceremony and highlighted U.S. support for Arab women's political participation.

Ten women representing four political parties in Jordan, as well as four independent activists, participated in the week-long training. Women were chosen by the party leadership of Al-Ahd, Al-Wasat, the National Constitutional Party and the Democratic Party of the Left to participate in the campaign school. NDI will meet with all participants in mid-April to hear their feedback on the training and to identify concrete follow-up activities.

F. NDI Beirut Regional Resource Center

NDI's Beirut office serves as Regional Resource Center that supports the Institute's programs in the MENA region, including Jordan projects and initiatives. The primary task of the regional resource center is to identify opportunities for programmatic linkages between Lebanese civil society organizations and similar groups in Jordan. Additionally, the office hosts a regional translation and publication center that provides high-quality Arabic documents, inexpensive translation of training materials, as well as expert interpreters to the Institute's programs in Jordan. Mr. Joseph Hall, NDI's Senior Regional Representative, based in Beirut, is also directly involved in programming and is assisting in the management of the office in Jordan.

During this quarter, the NDI Lebanon translation and publication team finished translating various materials for the Win with Women Regional Campaign School. Materials included power point presentations, handouts, agenda, logistics memo, invitations, etc. Additionally, NDI's graphic designer worked on the banner design, podium signs, name tags, certificates and layout of the agenda and handouts for the event.

V. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objective # 1: To provide political parties and parliamentary blocs with the technical skills and resources necessary to develop coherent national platforms and effectively present them to constituents.

- The Democratic Party of the Left and the Democratic Alliance Bloc in parliament are coming together to strengthen the democratic current in the country and are working more closely together to develop national programs and policies for Jordan

Objective # 2: To assist political parties and parliamentary blocs to expand their support bases and become better representatives of the Jordanian electorate.

Objective # 3: To promote increased support for women activists in political parties and encourage the adoption of effective measures to strengthen their roles.

- Political parties in Jordan have begun to think strategically about ways to recruit and empower women within the parties, particularly in light of the new draft political parties law. The draft law allows for public funding for parties, with the condition that they have a 10 percent female membership base. Parties would be eligible for additional funding if women serve on their executive committees and boards. They would also get added funding if they decide to nominate women candidates in legislative elections. This and other political developments have revealed to parties the importance of engaging women in their programs and activities. Party leaders are now developing plans for expanding their female membership base and for empowering current women members of their party. The parties are coordinating closely with women's NGOs on that through regular meetings and consultations.
- Ten women representing four political parties in Jordan recently participated in an NDI week-long regional training in Amman on campaign skills and political advocacy. Women were chosen by the party leadership of Al-Ahd, Al-Wasat, the National Constitutional Party and the Democratic Party of the Left to participate in the Win with Women Regional Campaign School held in Amman from March 28-April 1. Women party activists are now requesting NDI's assistance through additional training workshops on campaign management and training of trainers methods.

VI. EVALUATION/CONCLUSIONS

Parliamentary Blocs

NDI's consultations with the parliamentary blocs revealed that for the most part, MPs do see the value of working together as a bloc. With the exception of the IAF bloc, members of

blocs do not belong to any political party. Yet, they have come together based on shared values and principles, as well as generally common policy positions. Each bloc has at least a designated spokesperson, and some also have a Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, or Rapporteur. All bloc officials are selected through direct election by members. While certain blocs meet regularly and have well-defined meeting agendas, others meet only before major debates and votes. A major challenge that blocs face is that members often do not vote as a bloc but instead according to their own individual desires. There are no provisions that obligate the MP to vote the same way as the rest of his bloc and no discipline mechanisms to handle defections. Blocs also lack an effective “house strategy”, particularly with regard to legislation, committees, and the question period.

“Collective action is always better. It has a bigger impact than individual action, especially within Parliament.”

***-MP Khaled Break
Member, National Front Bloc***

It is clear that blocs in the Jordanian legislature have the potential to play a strong and significant role in ensuring that all three basic functions of the parliament – representation, legislation, and oversight – are well met. What is also clear is that blocs currently lack the support and resources to effectively play that role. Blocs continue to be volatile structures within the House of Representatives and MPs consistently withdraw from blocs to join another or to become “independent”. Through the course of NDI’s week-long meetings, two MPs had indeed withdrawn from their respective blocs. Currently, blocs receive no financial, material or staffing support from Parliament since they are not recognized by the legislature’s internal bylaws or rules of procedure. MPs unanimously agree that this is the greatest impediment to bloc development and sustainability. Moreover, with the exception of the IAF grouping, blocs have weak and in most cases absolutely no interaction with political parties outside of parliament. They are limited in their ability to reach out to citizens and to build support bases for their bloc’s policy positions.

That being said, there are important reform initiatives currently taking place in Jordan’s parliament that when adopted, will contribute greatly to the strengthening of parliamentary blocs. For example, through its meetings with the various blocs, NDI became aware of a current effort within the parliament to amend internal bylaws so that they may recognize parliamentary blocs and provide them with proper staffing and resources. These amendments are currently being discussed within the legal committee of the Lower House and are expected to be approved and go into effect in the next session. Other possible developments include the establishment of an internal oversight committee to monitor the MPs’ attendance and performance in committees and sessions, as well as the extension of the length of the ordinary session of parliament from four to

six months. The Permanent Bureau of Parliament¹ is also working to develop a code of conduct for MPs.

Through recent activities with MPs and blocs, NDI found a high level of interest in what the Institute has to offer in terms of technical expertise and resources. All seven parliamentary blocs and many independent MPs are eager to participate in NDI's skills building and exchange activities and have expressed support for the Institute's programs, despite an initial sense of hesitation and skepticism on the part of a limited few. NDI continues to enjoy a good working relationship with the Permanent Bureau and the Speaker's office and is constantly forging new relationships and strengthening existing ones with MPs as well as parliamentary officials and staff.

Political Parties

The number one impediment to political party development in Jordan seems to be the lack of public funding for parties. With no support from the government and the illegality of accepting foreign funds, parties have to strictly rely on donations from their members in order to operate. These donations are often seasonal and insufficient. Party leaders are generating good ideas for programs and activities but find themselves unable to implement their programs and reach out to constituents due to the lack of financial resources. By providing for public funding for parties, the new draft political parties law offers hope on this front. If passed, the law would contribute greatly to political party development and would help foster a competitive multiparty political system in the country.

"We are handicapped. Without funding, we cannot move."

***-Dr. Insaf El Rabady
Vice President, National Constitutional Party (NCP)***

NDI was overall impressed with the seriousness and commitment of the political party activists that it met with. Meetings with the NCP and Al-Ahed, for example, each brought together over a dozen active party officers and members and were characterized by sophisticated political discussions and dialogue. Al-Ahed also has well-developed party bylaws and an extensive website. It was clear to NDI that the mere recognition and support of their efforts was very important to party activists who often find themselves investing their own time and money to advocate for change and democracy, with no immediate results. The parties were very welcoming of NDI's technical assistance and are poised to participate in future program

¹ The Permanent Bureau of the Lower House of Parliament is composed of the following 5 members: The Speaker of the House of Representatives, the First Deputy Speaker, the Second Deputy Speaker, and the two Assistants.

activities. They are especially interested in learning more about the experiences of parties in other countries in the region, such as Morocco and Yemen.

VII. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

In the next quarter, NDI will organize several training workshops for parliamentary blocs that focus on such topics as comparative rules of procedures for blocs and the impact internal bylaws have on the functioning of the blocs. Activities will also address how MPs can build a strong, cohesive and effective parliamentary bloc, with an opportunity to learn more about regional and international models. NDI will also organize activities for individual MPs on such topics as the proper role of an MP, message development and dissemination, constituency outreach, and media relations. With regard to political parties, NDI will hold strategic planning workshops for interested parties and will work to provide experience sharing/exchange opportunities for party leaders with other political parties in the region, particularly from Morocco and Yemen. NDI will also hold roundtable discussions with the parties to debate the new draft political parties' law. Throughout these activities, NDI will continue its efforts to strengthen women's political participation in the Kingdom and will work closely with political parties and women's NGOs to help them develop and adapt concrete measures by which they can encourage women's participation and candidacy for elected office.